JOSE' PACHECO PEREIRA, member of the Portuguese Parliament

TL 1444-24

Mr. Chairman

Ladies and Gentleman,

There are specific and strong reasons why the voice of the Portuguese members of Parliament, must be heard in this international forum, whose history and contribution to the decolonization cause and the freedom and independence of colonized peoples is well known, and appreciated.

Our, parliament is the result of the portuguese democratic regime and is the source of its legitimacy. Our fifteen years history coincides not only with the of democratization of Portugal , but also with the decolonization of our former colonies.

As an institution who gave substance to the democratic regime , our Parliament has framed the main constitutional and legal lines for the decolonization of East Timor. In our consitution, which was recently revised, we proclaim that "Potugal remains obliged to the responsibility ,according to the international law, to protect and guarantee the right of East Timor to self-determination and independence".

Our constitution maintain as a specific task of the

President and the Government, to implement all the necessary steps to fullfil" these objectives, however, the Parliament remains as a very important partner in this process. Our Parliament has a specific committee to deal with the decolonization process of East Timor, and guarantees that a large political consensus exist in this issue.

The committee to follow the East Timor situation, to which I and my portuguese parliamentary colleagues belong, not only collects all the information available on the territory, but also produces documents and other materials on East Timor. We maintain also close contacts with other parliaments to raise these issues at the political and public opinion level.

The Portuguese Parliament has also a crucial role supporting the efforts of the President and the Government, giving them the strength that originates in the fact that all portuguese political parties - from the communists to the conservatives - agree on the main lines of the portuguese position on East Timor. There is no single example of any important disagreement between these very different political parties.

The common points, in these large consensus are the stong condemnation of the Indonesia invasion of 1975, and of the following ocupation, the condemnation of the sistematic

violations of the human rights ,the forced assimilation of the East Timor people to an alien culture, with concrete acts of economic, social, political, and religious repression, the denial of international law and the rights internationaly recognized to Portugal as the administering power to procede with the decolonization of the territory.

Recent circumstances have given the Portuguese Parliament a new important and delicate role on the East Timor issue. It is well known that, following the mandate given by the United Nations Assembly to the Secretary-General and in result of the negotiative efforts that have taken place, our Parliament was invited by the Indonesian Paliament to send a delegation to visit Indonesia and East Timor. Since we want to make a positive contibution to the efforts made by the Secretary-General, and since we act in good faith and under clear principles of ethics and international law, the Portuguese Parliament accepted the invitation provided that that would not mean any acceptance of the "fait accompli" situation in East Timor. These is why the Portuguese Parliament prepared a set of minimal conditions, that are now in the p rocess of being negotiated. We don't want to say anything about those talks but we hope that they can help the cause of peace, and the rights and hopes of the East Timor people.

This is why we must express our deepest concern and condemnation with recent reports and reliable information about an increase of the human rights violations by the Indonesian occupation authorities, in East Timor. Recent reports show that in the last months there is a prosecution wave against individuals and institutions, like the catholic church.

If this situation, that is still going on, is not stopped, there is no possibility of any progress in the resolution of the East Timor issue.

Mr. Chairman,

Portugal doesn't have any colonial or imperial interests and claims. It doesn't have any interest in East Timor with the exception of long-term cultural and historical interests, and the obligations originated in the position of the administering power.

Portugal doesn't have, or want to have any influence on the future internal organisation of the territory. Our Constitution and the international law is clear:

The East Timorese people has the right to choose his own future, the right to self-determination, and if that is his own will to by fully independent as a nation. Our obligation to the people of East Timor is to make sure that they can exercise that

right, in total freedom, without any coercion or undue pressure, in a controlled process, under portuguese and international supervision. Until the moment in which this is going to take place, we remain an active voice in support of these rights.

We have conscience that this is a difficult and lonely combat, and that our voice only has the strenght that comes from the principles of civilization contained in the International law.

It is possible that this voice may seem to fragile to those ones who believe only in the "realpolitik" and in the politics of "fait accompli", but we know that history is not so kind as it seems with pure exibition of force.

This is why we are here, as petitioners, appealing from this international tribune, in favor of the rights of a people who lives in a small and remote part of the world, who have been caught in a hostile moment of history, and must have international support until it is master of its own destiny.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman

José Pacheco Pereira